

Appln. No.: 09/818,721
Amdt. Dated March 6, 2006
Reply to Office Action dated January 9, 2006

Remarks/Arguments

Reconsideration of this application is requested.

Claims 1-6 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC § 103 as being unpatentable over Manduley (U.S. Patent No. 5,648,916) in view of Rosenbaum et. al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,031,223).

Manduley discloses the following in col. 1, lines 46-58.

"This invention overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art by providing a system for automatically (where possible) converting hard copy paper mail into electronic mail, while allowing those already using computers to communicate with those in the paper domain. The system automates the process of distributing incoming mail within a building, outgoing and between locations. The apparatus of this invention utilizes paper handling machines, while integrating the paper handling machines with electronic networks."

The Examiner stated the following in pages 2 and 3 of the January 9, 2006, Final Rejection.

"However, Manduley does not detail checking a postal address database and the recipient's email database;

notifying the recipient of the availability of the deposited physical mail; notifying the carrier of the manner in which the recipient would like the physical mail delivered; notifying the carrier that the sender wants the deposited physical mail to be delivered directly to the recipient or that the sender elects to permit the recipient to divert the physical mail; and if the sender elects to permit the recipient to divert the physical mail, delivering physical mail to the recipient in the manner specified by the recipient to the carrier.

In the same endeavor, Rosenbaum discloses a system and method for processing of scanned mail wherein the system (i.e. LAN server or carrier) interacts to the operator/user workstation to provide the alternative selections of address, name which divert the mail delivery [Rosenbaum, col 8 line 42-col 10 line 45]; including using the electronic bin /mass storage or database [Rosenbaum, Fig 1]; the volume of mail is directed to each receiving location [Rosenbaum, col 10 lines 1-45]; the user can

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select (i.e.: permit), check, match and insert the name, address between the knowledge base program (i.e.: a postal database) and operation work station (i.e.: user workstation memory/database) [Rosenbaum, col 11 lines 1-36]

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to modify the technique of providing the operator/user selects and changes the mailing address as taught by Rosenbaum into the Manduley's apparatus in order to utilize the control of email delivery. Doing so would provide a more effective and comprehensive way to communicate with people either by email addresses or physical mailing addresses."

Rosenbaum discloses the following in col. 8 line 42- col. 45.

"Since the resolved address block 40 can be transmitted over the communications link 29 at an earlier time than the expected time of arrival of the physical mail piece 22 at the receiving location 28, the information contained in the resolved address data block 40 can be used at the receiving location 28 to allocate resources at the destination location. Resource allocation information can be computed by the CPU 23' and output at a display and/or printer or at the workstations 31'. Where an address data block is misread or cannot be read by the OCR 20 at the sending location 10, a sequence of operator intervention steps and/or algorithmic interpretation steps can be carried out. As is shown in FIG. 8, the scanned image 45' of the address block can be displayed at an operator workstation 31 at either the sending location 10, the off-line or remote processing location 14, or at the receiving location 28, and the alphanumeric character string 54 resulting from the OCR recognition operation can also be displayed. FIG. 7 illustrates examples of operator assists by the workstation 31, 31' or 31" to enable spelling aid and validation of company names, zones, address systems, and miscellaneous information to assist the operator in making a decision about how to correct an OCR misread alphanumeric string 54. FIG. 9 illustrates the case where the address block 45 on the mail piece 22 is not properly aligned and the operator can use the mouse 46 to designate the portion of the image 45' representing the destination address. The workstation 31 can then automatically compute the correct alphanumeric character string 54. In FIG. 10, a third case is shown where the address

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block 45 has a poor image 45' which is misread by the OCR as the alphanumeric string 54. The workstation 31, 31' or 31" can perform a data base lookup of street names, for example, whose spellings most closely approximate the alphanumeric character string 54. A first alternative 56A and a second alternative 56B are then presented to the operator who can then select the appropriate alternative spelling, which is then inserted as the selected Street name into the portion 44 of the - address data block 40.

FIG. 11, consisting of FIGS. 11A, 11B and 11C, is a sequence of method steps performed at the sending location 10 to process an incoming mail piece in the system shown in FIG. 2. At step 60, a mail piece is input to the conveyor 12 and an II) number is assigned to the mail piece and an address data block is created. Then in step 62, the mail piece is scanned by the OCR 20 and the — image 45' is captured and stored in the image data block 17 of the memory 19. Then in step 64, the bar code printer 21 prints the ID number 24' on the mail piece 22. The image 45' of the mail piece is buffered in the memory 19 and optionally in the mass store 25. The CPU 23 - then in step 66, attempts to locate the address block in the captured image 45'. In step 68, if the address block is located, then the process passes to step 72. However, if the address block has not been located, then at step 70, 3 an operator at one of the workstations 31 will assist in locating the address block, as was shown for case 2 in FIG. 9. In step 72, an attempt is made to resolve the image portion 30' for the city/state and zip code. In step 74, if the image 30' is resolved, then the process passes 35 to step 76 where optional editing of the image data can be performed and then the resolved alphanumeric string - for the city/state and zip are buffered in portion 42 of the address data block 40 and are also output to the mail sorting machine 33 to sort the mail piece on the conveyor 12. At step 74 if the city/state/zip code image 30' is not resolved, then the process flows to step 82 where - the mail piece 22 is stored in the temporary holding tray 18. Then, one of the operators at the workstations 31 will perform an operator assist to resolve the city/state/zip code information in step 84. This information is then stored in the portion 42 of the address data block 40. In step 86, the mail piece exits the holding tray 18 and the bar code reader reads the ID number for the mail piece and uses the II) number in step 88 as the address for accessing the city/state/zip information from portion 42 of the

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address data block 40 in the memory 19 and this information is then output in step 90 to the mail piece sorting machine 33 to sort the mail piece on the conveyor belt 12. Then in step 80, the sorted mail piece is transferred from the conveyor belt 12 to the transport 26 for physical transportation to the destination location 28. Then the process flows to step 92 where the mail piece electronic folder 16 is assembled as shown in FIG. 4, and this telecommunications message is then output by the communications adaptor 27 on the communications link 29 to either the off-line/remote processing system 14 or to the receiving location 28, where the image 32' of the addressee, street name and street number can be resolved into alphanumeric strings. Alternately, the resolution of the image 32' for the addressee, street name and Street number can be performed at the sending location 10 by the CPU 23.

For the example where the resolution of the image 32' of the addressee, street name and Street number information is to be performed at the off-line or remote processing location 14, FIG. 12 illustrates the sequence of operational steps for performing that resolution. In FIG. 12, step 94 receives and stores the mail piece electronic folder 16. Then in step 96, a second pass of the stored image of 45' is performed for character recognition of the image 32' of the addressee, street name and street number information. In step 98, a validation test is performed to determine if the street address which is resolved in step 96 is a street address which exists in the city information which was resolved in step 72. This can be performed by a data base comparison, using a data base containing all of the valid Street names for each of a plurality of cities. If the validation test is not passed, then an operator assist can be provided to interpret and correct either the resolved street address information or city information. Then in step 100, a validation test can be performed to determine if the street number range resolved in step 96 and the street match the zip code resolved in step 72. If the validation test is not passed, then an operator assist step can be performed. Then in step 102, a validation can be performed to determine if the addressee information resolved in step 96 corresponds to an addressee name which is shown to exist at the street address which was resolved in step 96. If the validation test is not passed, then an operator assist step can be performed. Then in step 104, the mail piece electronic folder 16 can have its portion 44 augmented with the additional resolved

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information for the addressee, street name and Street number information which was resolved in step 96 and which was validated in steps 98, 100 and 102. Then in step 106, the mail piece electronic folders 16 can be sorted and batched by the identity of the receiving location 28. Then in Step 108, statistics can be compiled as to the volume of mail which is directed to each respective receiving location 28. This information can be used at each respective receiving location 28 to allocate resources necessary to handle the physical mail which is now en route on the transport 26. Then in step 110, the sorted and batched mail piece electronic folder 16 can be transmitted over the communications link 29 to the 3 respective receiving locations 28."

Manduley discloses a system that automates the process of distributing incoming mail within a building.

Rosenbaum discloses a process that automatically sorts and delivers the mail piece to it's correct address.

The cited art does not disclose or anticipate the method claimed by applicant in claims 1-6 as amended. The cited art does not disclose or anticipate the following steps of claim 1 as amended namely:

notifying the carrier that the sender wants the deposited physical mail to be delivered directly to the recipient or that the sender elects to permit the recipient to divert the physical mail; and

delivering physical mail to the recipient by the carrier in the manner specified by the recipient to the carrier, if the sender elects to permit the recipient to divert the physical mail.

An advantage of applicant's claimed invention over the cited art is that the recipient may want the mail physically delivered to their house faster or slower, or the mail physically redirected to the recipient's temporary address, or physically delivered to the recipient's agent, or physically delivered to the recipient's attorney, or physically returned to the mailer or have carrier open the physical mail and have the

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carrier e-mail or fax the contents of the mailpiece to the recipient and/or parties designated by the recipient. The foregoing recipient elections will only be allowable if the sender elects to permit the recipient to divert the mail.

In view of the above, claims 1-6 as amended are patentable. If the Examiner has any questions, would he please call the undersigned at the telephone number noted below.

Respectfully submitted,



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